WAFA PRAISE AND PRAYER – FALL 1993

ELWA RETURNS TO SHORTWAVE AS PEACE PROCESS BEGINS

Just nine days after the cease fire took effect in Liberia, messages of God's love, grace, peace and His holiness, justice, and judgment were being proclaimed to the entire nation as Radio ELWA returned to shortwave.

Opening ceremonies attended by a host of local officials and friends on August 9th celebrated ELWA's first shortwave broadcasts since the station was destroyed by war in 1990.

But the return to the 60 meter shortwave band actually began in November of 1992 during the second battle for Monrovia. What a time to begin Phase II of ELWA's restoration with rockets blasting the city and nearly all of SIM's missionaries evacuated...again!

Services Director Steve Kejr, who remained at ELWA with three other missionaries throughout the crisis, says it began one night when he couldn't sleep.

"I woke up in the middle of the night thinking about what was happening in this nation," Steve told coworkers in a letter dated November 30. In the letter, Steve said he felt "the devil (was) getting the glory..." adding that the people had nothing to feed on except Satan's propaganda and war news. His concern was for the nearly two million Liberians, about half in Liberia's interior and half displaced in other countries nearby, who could not receive ELWA. ELWA FM reaches about 50 miles, which limits it to the greater Monrovia area.

"People all over the country were looking for hope, and there was none to be found in what they read or heard," Steve says.

Friends of ELWA, Ed and Ruth Pienkowski, came all the way from Chicago to help get the shortwave transmitter on the air...and to meet the people behind the voices.

Despite earlier decisions not to use shortwave until the country was reunited, Steve says as he lay awake he began to feel strongly impressed that plans for return to shortwave should proceed immediately.

Steve shared his burden with the other missionaries who had remained at ELWA during the battle for Monrovia and with Broadcast Director Fayiah Kabakole. "We discussed it, prayed about it and agreed we should move ahead," he says. When SIM Liberia Associate Director Ron Sonius returned from Sierra Leone, where he was stranded when Monrovia was attacked, he concurred. Ron says, "It was not only a military war, but a battle for the minds and souls of the people. People were struggling with what is right and wrong...they were tired of war and angry and eager for hope. God's Word is the answer."

A letter sent to ELWA evacuees in adjacent Ivory Coast brought similar reactions, and consensus grew that a window of opportunity was opening in Liberia. It was time to get going!

The rest is now history. Approvals were given, skepticism answered and orders placed. Funds for the project were already in hand. With the help of a friend, Ed Pienkowski, in Illinois (USA), a used Collins transmitter was located, rebuilt as a shortwave transmitter, and shipped to Liberia. Ed also arrived in Liberia to help complete the project. Numerous delays, missing parts and assorted mishaps threatened defeat; but in the end, God's timing was perfect. ELWA's return to shortwave on 4.76 MHz coincided with Liberia's first promising peace since the invasion of 1989. ■

The rest of the story...

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Behind every story like that above, there is usually more than meets the eye. Here is the story behind the story of the landmark event of ELWA's return to shortwave broadcasting.]

Chapter One begins about 15 years ago in Elburn, Illinois. This small city some 45 miles west of Chicago is home to Bell Laboratories engineer Ed Pienkowski and his wife, Ruth. Avid ham radio operators, the Pienkowskis offer to serve as a communications link when their pastor's daughter, Jean Giles, and her husband Greg, leave for Liberia and ELWA as SIM missionaries.

Over the next decade Ed and Ruth befriend numerous ELWA missionaries patching radio calls all over the United States by long distance telephone hookup. They hesitate to admit it, but the Pienkowski's have also borne the costs of these calls, modestly insisting, "This is our ministry."

Chapter Two begins when Ed retires from his engineering career at AT&T Bell Labs. He volunteers his services in the engineering department at HCJB World Missionary Radio Fellowship in Elkhart, Indiana. There he and an HCJB engineer speculate about building an FM radio

The rest of the story, continued

transmitter "small enough for a missionary to carry in a suitcase." In January of 1992, just 15 months after ELWA's broadcast facilities are totally destroyed by war, the prototype of the "transmitter-in-a-suitcase" puts the station back on the air. The co-linear FM antenna is Ed's design and handiwork.

Chapter Three gets underway in early 1993 with SIM-ELWA's search for a used shortwave transmitter. Through his involvement with HCJB Ed locates both a transmitter and a contractor to modify it. "I had no idea where to look or how to start until I happened to see a catalogue at HCJB," he recalls. By May, Ed is in Syracuse, New York, where he spends several weeks helping the contractors and ELWA engineer Cork Loken recondition and modify the transmitter to ELWA specifications.

Our story climaxes in July 1993 with Ed and Ruth Pienkowski's arrival in Monrovia, Liberia. They have come at their own expense so Ed can help complete the project when the shortwave transmitter arrives. For the first time, these long time friends of ELWA walk its paths and feel its refreshing sea breezes, and finally meet the people behind the voices they have come to know so well. And when at last the switch is thrown and the voice of "Eternal Love Winning Africa" once again bounces across Liberia via shortwave, by God's grace the man who played so integral a role in Radio ELWA's resurrection, is there to see it happen. ■

Man, Cote D'Ivoire
September 8, 1993

ELWA
PO Box 10-0192
1000 Monrovia, Liberia

Dear Sir(s):

It is with great joy that I'm writing you this letter. How I wished I were with you to give you a big hug.

Just the other day as my son turned on the radio to try to get BBC, he tuned in to your well familiar call letters (E L W A). We could hardly hold back our tears of joy, for you made us feel so homesick.

Thank you for bring to us (the Liberians away from home) such a comfort and encouragement through your broadcast. You may not realized how many wounds you are healing through your meaningful programs.

Your family contact program has enabled many to know the whereabouts of their family members. Our prayer is that God will continue to encourage, strengthen and keep you on the air through this difficult time.

Will you please play a song on your evening requests for the following persons: Rev. Ray Richards and all the members of the Liberia Inland Church in River Cess County, Oldman Glaybo and family, all of Liberia Inland Mission in River Cess County. This is coming from Mr. and Mrs. Robert B. Glaybo and family of Man, Ivory Coast.

May God richly bless you.

Sincerely yours,

Robert B. Glaybo (signed)

The letter (above) *represents the response which has already begun arriving at ELWA from refugees who have been cut off from their home and family for several years.*

Bader appointed Director for Abidjan FM Project

Luc Bader, of Lausanne, Switzerland, has been appointed director of SIM's effort to launch a Christian FM radio station in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Bader and his wife, Francoise, rejoined SIM in early September after an absence of fourteen years.

The FM radio facility which Bader is to build will reach well over two million people in greater Abidjan, a city considered the cultural and economic center of French-speaking West Africa. The project, for which funds are now being raised by SIM, includes construction of studio and transmitter sites, housing, staff training and cost of the first year of operations. SIM is also seeking a qualified broadcast engineer for the project.

Among Bader's early responsibilities will be final licensing negotiations with the Ivorian government. SIM's license is expected to be granted pending the acceptance of technical specifications and government policies for religious broadcasting. The government Ministry of Communications accepted the one-hundred-page application and fees last October when for the first time it offered thirteen radio and TV licenses to private broadcasters. Six commercial licenses have been granted, but none as yet to religious stations. SIM's is the only religious application under consideration.

SIM envisions similar local and regional stations to regain an audience for Christian radio in West Africa. Since the 1990 destruction by war of Radio ELWA in Monrovia, Liberia, few West Africans can receive Christian broadcasts in French or other West African languages.

Luc and Francoise Bader have served several European organizations since leaving SIM; among these are Campus Crusade and a Swiss Bible society. Of their four children, one remains at home. The Baders now seek prayer and financial support as SIMers appointed to the Abidjan FM project. Bader's assignment will begin as soon as support needs have been met.

The Abidjan FM Project will be the third such Christian radio station in West Africa's major cities. Until now, no such Christian broadcasting has been established other than SIM's Radio ELWA in Liberia. In January 1992, its new FM facility returned ELWA to the air in war-torn Monrovia, Liberia, now a city of close to one million. In August 1993, ELWA's FM outreach was supplemented by a 10,000 watt short-wave transmitter covering Liberia and its surrounding countries. The second Christian FM station, sponsored by the Federation of Churches of Burkina Faso, is now under construction in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, a country north of Cote d'Ivoire. ■